



Crunching Numbers to Protect Our World

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MADISON – Mae Friederich is a self-described numbers freak.

That's a good thing. She uses that tendency to protect Wisconsin's environment and keep a level playing field for businesses.

Friederich audits companies' applications to be reimbursed for costs of cleaning up agrichemical spills, whether caused by accident or from long-term use of a site. She joined the Agrichemical Cleanup Program, or ACCP, in 1997 when it was just two years old. Housed in the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, the ACCP has reimbursed farmers and companies more than \$39 million.

Being part of the ACCP team is the best part of her job, Friederich says. "There are actually two parts of the program – technical oversight and reimbursement – yet we work together very closely. Trevor Bannister and Jason Lowery, our hydrogeologists, and I are led by Stan Senger. Stan was one of our hydrogeologists in the past, so he knows both aspects of the program inside and out," she says. "I believe we've developed a good, strong working relationship with both the ag industry and with their environmental consultants.

"I realize I'm very fortunate. I enjoy what I do, who I work with, and who I work for. I know that's not always the norm in today's world."

Senger, her supervisor, says she's a valuable member of that team: "Mae is a dedicated, honest and hardworking professional who truly serves the people of Wisconsin well. I am fortunate and grateful for having her on our team."

Friederich has a degree from Lakeland College in accounting, with a minor in business administration. She first joined state service with the Office of the Commissioner of Insurance (OCI), where she started as a financial examiner, auditing insurance companies' financial records. After four years, she took a payroll and benefits specialist position at OCI, and later an administrative assistant position so she could spend more time at home. She took the opportunity to move to DATCP so she could get back to "auditing, but without the traveling."

"Each day at DATCP is different and it's always changing. My primary focus is reimbursement applications, but I also assist with updating the groundwater database," she says. The database tracks results from sampling private wells and monitoring wells to detect agrichemical contamination in groundwater. She also audits "tonnage reports," which determine the fees that licensed companies pay to the department's feed and fertilizer programs.

"It helps keep a level playing field for everyone," she says. "In one audit where I was working with our compliance section, we were able to show that a company was illegally selling products. On the other hand, I've completed audits where we found the department owed the licensee a refund."



Mae Friederich

Friederich's son, Josh, is a mechanic. "I also have a grand-dog, Buddy," she jokes. Turning serious, she adds, "My mom is my role model and taught me through example: Do everything in life with dedication and compassion."

She has returned to live on the farm where she grew up. When she was a kid, her family raised Herefords, chickens, pigs and horses, and cash-cropped soybeans and hay. "Now I just raise a family of peacocks," she says. Last year a peacock showed up on her doorstep, perhaps a refugee from a peacock flock her father had relocated to a different farm years ago. So she found him a girlfriend and they now have five babies. Although she feeds them, they come and go as they please.

Friederich is an angler and an avid photographer. "My son calls me the paparazzi." But, she says, "I've come to realize it's really the bonfires by the creek and the time with family and friends I enjoy most."

And she's a traveler, starting with time in Brisbane, Australia, as a high school exchange student. During a trip to Alaska, rusting tanks she saw near the ocean reminded her of the work she and her co-workers do: "Being raised on a farm, I was always conscious of what's around me, but not to this degree."

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